

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. **(Currently Amended)** An absorbent article having a front portion and a rear portion and comprising an outer sheet that provides an outer surface of the absorbent article, an inner sheet disposed on the inner side of the outer sheet, and a plurality of elastic members for making below-waist gathers disposed between the outer sheet and the inner sheet, wherein

a patterned sheet having a pattern is disposed between the outer sheet and the inner sheet in the widthwise middle area of at least one of the front portion and the rear portion, the elastic members each have (a) a portion contributory to elastic extensibility and contractibility in each of the regions outside the lateral sides of the patterned sheet and (b) a portion substantially non-contributory to elastic extensibility and contractibility in the region inside the lateral sides of the patterned sheet, and

the portion substantially non-contributory to elastic extensibility and contractibility is disposed between the patterned sheet and the inner sheet .

2. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the outer sheet has a total transmittance of 55% or higher.

3. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the portion substantially non-contributory to elastic extensibility and contractibility are cut ends or a fragment or both resulting from cutting the elastic members.

4. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 3, wherein the cut ends and fragment are formed by pressing elastic members of continuous length together with the patterned sheet with a pressing member having projections providing dots, the projections being arranged only in the area where a main pattern of the patterned sheet is absent.

5. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 3, wherein the cut ends and fragment are formed by pressing elastic members of continuous length together with the patterned sheet with a pressing member having projections providing dots, the projections being arranged in both the area where a main pattern of the patterned sheet is present and the area where the main pattern is absent, the individual dots having an area of 0.001 to 30 mm<sup>2</sup>, and the total dot area ratio in the area where the main pattern is present being lower than that in the area where the main pattern is absent.

6. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 3, wherein the cut ends and fragment are formed by pressing elastic members of continuous length together with the patterned sheet with a pressing member having projections providing dots, the projections being arranged substantially uniformly over the entire area of the patterned sheet.

7. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 1, which is a pull-on absorbent article.

8. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the outer sheet is a nonwoven fabric.

9. **(Original)** The absorbent article according to claim 8, wherein the nonwoven fabric has a basis weight of 5 to 30 g/mm<sup>2</sup>.

10. **(Original)** A process of producing the absorbent article according to claim 1, comprising the steps of disposing a patterned sheet at an interval on a running outer sheet of continuous length, continuously introducing elastic members of continuous length between the outer sheet with the patterned sheet on and a running inner sheet of continuous length, bonding the inner sheet to the patterned sheet side of the outer sheet to form a laminate, and cutting the elastic members of continuous length by pressing a pressing member having projections against the region where the patterned sheet is disposed.

11. **(New)** The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein a hot-melt adhesive is over a stock sheet except for the region inside the lateral sides of each patterned sheet where the below-waist elastic members are disposed or the adhesive is over the stock sheet except that the

amount of the adhesive applied to the region inside the lateral sides of each patterned sheet where the below-waist elastic members are disposed is reduced as compared with the lateral regions.

12. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the elastic members of continuous length is cut at two or more positions in the portion substantially non-contributory to elastic extensibility and contractibility is disposed between the patterned sheet and the inner sheet.